

CLAIMS

1. A method, comprising:

creating a plurality of printer groups;

5 for each of a plurality of printers, associating the printer with one or more of the printer groups by assigning a printer identifier with at least one of the one or more printer groups, the printer identifier uniquely identifying the printer;

collecting data from one or more of the plurality of printers;

10 aggregating the collected data by printer group for one or more of the printer groups; and

processing the aggregated data.

15 2. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising creating the printer identifier for each printer.

3. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising adding an additional printer to one or more of the printer groups by associating a printer identifier with the one or more printer groups, the printer identifier uniquely
20 identifying the additional printer.

4. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising removing a printer from one or more of the printer groups by dissociating the printer identifier associated with the printer from the one or more printer groups.

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5. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising moving a printer associated with a first group to a second group by dissociating the printer identifier from the first group and associating the printer identifier with the second group.

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6. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising adding an additional printer group to the one or more printer groups.

7. The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising removing a printer group from the one or more printer groups.

8. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the collecting data from one or more of the plurality of printers further comprises collecting printer usage data from printer memory in one or more of the printers from which the printer usage data is collected.

9. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the collecting data from one or more of the plurality of printers further comprises collecting printer usage data from component memory integrated into a replaceable component installed into one or more of the printers from which the printer usage data is collected.

10. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the one or more printer groups include printers from a first physical location and a second physical location.

11. The method as recited in claim 10, wherein the first physical location is a main site and the second physical location is a remote site.

12. A method, comprising:

5 creating a plurality of printer groups;

for each of a plurality of printers, associating the printer with one or more of the printer groups by assigning a printer identifier with at least one of the one or more printer groups, the printer identifier uniquely identifying the printer;

10 presenting the one or more printer groups and the printers associated with the one or more printer groups in a user interface;

collecting data from one or more of the plurality of printers;

aggregating the collected data by printer group for one or more of the printer groups; and

15 processing the aggregated data.

13. The method as recited in claim 12, further comprising allowing printers to be added or removed from printer groups via the user interface.

20 14. The method as recited in claim 12, further comprising allowing printer groups to be added via the user interface.

15 15. The method as recited in claim 12, further comprising allowing printers associated with printer groups to be rearranged using a drag and drop method via the user interface.

16. The method as recited in claim 12, further comprising allowing printers to be associated with or dissociated from printer groups using a cut and past method via the user interface.

5 17. A printer, comprising:
a printer identifier that uniquely identifies the printer;
a data collection module configured to collect printer usage data from
the printer;
a connection to a host computer, the host computer configured to
10 associate the printer identifier with one or more printer groups identified by the
host computer;
memory; and
printer usage data stored in the memory.

15 18. The printer as recited in claim 17, wherein the memory is printer
memory.

19. The printer as recited in claim 17, wherein the memory is
component memory integrated into a replaceable component of the printing
20 device.

20. The printer as recited in claim 17, further comprising a browser,
and wherein the connection to the host computer is accomplished via the
browser.

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21. The printer as recited in claim 17, further comprising a network interface card, and wherein the connection to the host computer is accomplished via the network interface card.

5 22. The printer as recited in claim 17, further comprising a communications port connected to a host computer, and wherein the connection to the host computer is accomplished via the communications port.

10 23. The printer as recited in claim 17, wherein the data collection module is further configured to collect data demarcated by one or more time frames.

24. A system, comprising:

a processor;

15 memory;

at least one data port for transmitting data to and receiving data from a plurality of printers, each printer having a printer identifier that uniquely identifies the printer; and

20 a printer group information module configured to associate each printer with a printer group, collect printer usage data from the printers of one or more printer groups, and aggregate the printer usage data.

25 25. The system as recited in claim 24, wherein the printer group information module is further configured to add one or more printers to a printer group.

26. The system as recited in claim 24, wherein the printer group information module is further configured to remove one or more printers from a printer group.

5 27. A computing device programmed to present a user interface that allows a user to perform the following functions on the computing device:

create a plurality of printer groups;

for each of a plurality of printers, associate a printer with one or more of the printer groups by assigning a printer identifier with at least one of the one
10 or more printer groups, the printer identifier uniquely identifying the printer;

collect data from one or more of the plurality of printers; and

aggregate the collected data by printer group for one or more of the printer groups.

15 28. The computing device as recited in claim 27, further programmed to allow a printer group to be added via the user interface.

29. The computing device as recited in claim 27, further programmed to allow a printer group to be removed via the user interface.

20 30. The computing device as recited in claim 27, further programmed to allow a printer to be added to one or more printer groups via the user interface.

31. The computing device as recited in claim 27, further programmed to allow a printer to be removed from one or more printer groups via the user interface.

5 32. A computing device, comprising:
memory; and
a processor configured to process computer-executable instructions to perform the following functions:
10 associating a printer identifier from each of a plurality of printers with one or more of multiple printer groups;
collecting printer usage data from the printers associated with one or more of the printer groups; and
aggregating the collected data according to printer group.

15 33. The computing device as recited in claim 32, wherein the processor is further configured to add a new printer to one or more of the printer groups by associating a printer identifier for the new printer with the printer groups.

20 34. The computing device as recited in claim 32, wherein the processor is further configured to remove a printer from one or more of the printer groups by dissociating the printer identifier for the printer from the printer groups.

25 35. The computing device as recited in claim 32, wherein the processor is further configured to create a new printer group and associate a

printer identifier from one or more of the plurality of printers with the new printer group.

36. The computing device as recited in claim 32, wherein the
- 5 processor is further configured to remove a printer group and dissociate any printer identifiers associated with the printer group from the removed printer group.

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